



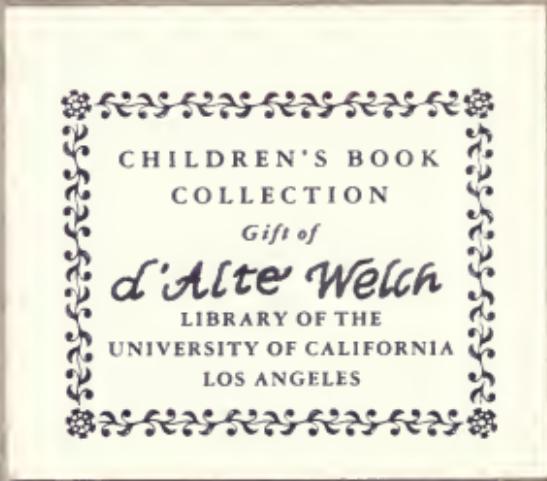
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A

COURSE OF LECTURES

FOR

Sunday Evenings.

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47-48, 79-80, 83-84



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Published December 1st. 1783, by John Marshall & C^o.
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A

COURSE OF LECTURES,

FOR

Sunday Evenings.

CONTAINING

RELIGIOUS ADVICE

TO

YOUNG PERSONS.

THIRD EDITION.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY JOHN MARSHALL, NO. 4,
ALDERMARY CHURCH-YARD, BOW-LANE, AND
NO. 17, QUEEN-STREET, CHEAPSIDE. 1796.

To —, —, —, —.

My dear young Friends,

AS I have a very high opinion of the goodness of your hearts, and am deeply interested in your future happiness; I shall take the liberty of dedicating to you a work, of which your conduct and your request were the original occasion.

I HAVE, throughout the whole, addressed myself in the *singular* number, though without any intention of excluding *any* of you from an equal share in my regard; but merely, that *each* may take it as friendly expostulation, and private advice.

RELIGION is the highest concern of every individual; and therefore, is not distinguished (as are many of your accomplishments) by being peculiar to either *sex*, or to difference of situation. You *all* are *alike* obliged to pay obedience to the laws of God, to the duties of social life, and to the regulation of your tempers and manners; for which reason, every thing that can promote these important designs, should engage your attention and regard.

THE concerns of this life are of no further avail, than as they contribute to form your souls for the enjoyment of a future state. This is but a transitory situation: a *very few* years may finish your existence upon earth, and then its joys or its sorrows will

be past and forgotten. But the remembrance of your *actions*, the pleasure of your good, or the remorse for your evil deeds will *never* be effaced. Your happiness or misery throughout all *Eternity*, depends upon the improvement which you *now* make of the advantages you enjoy.

RECOLLECT *this* when you are likely to be seduced by temptation: and may the Almighty Governor of the world take you into his protection, guard you from the evil examples of life, and conduct you in the paths of virtue to a happy immortality hereafter.

MAY his blessing attend on the instructions which you will find in the following pages, and dispose your

your hearts to improve by the truths which they contain.

So will this proof of my friendship be a lasting advantage, and evince to you, with what sincerity I subscribe myself,

Your affectionate,

S—, S—.

INTRODUCTION.

I WENT a few months ago to pass some time with an intimate friend who has several children; and whose custom it usually is to read to his family on a *Sunday* evening. But I was rather surprised to find, that the younger part of his auditors appeared to be entirely inattentive to the serious truths which were contained in a very rational and well written discourse.

THE eldest daughter sat for some time listening with great earnestness; but by degrees, her eyes grew heavy, her head inclined alternately on either side, till she fell

into a profound sleep, interrupted only by involuntary starts when in danger of falling. Her sister, though more *wakeful*, was not better engaged, as she employed herself in counting the spots on her pocket handkerchief, and afterward in tying it into various forms; which, by attracting the observation of her brothers, seemed to engage them much more than any thing they might have heard from their father.

I TOOK the liberty, therefore, the next morning to remonstrate with them on the impropriety of such behaviour; and received for answer, that they could not, when they had taken the utmost pains to understand what their father had been reading, at all comprehend it: and therefore, if they did not in some manner amuse themselves, it would be impossible to keep awake; as such a long and silent confinement so much disposed them to be drowsy, that they could not refrain from sleep: but that, if the subjects were suited to the level of their capa-

cities, they should very *willingly* attend: and concluded with a fervent wish, that they had more religious books which they could comprehend.

THIS reply, I must acknowledge, appeared to me to be founded in nature and truth. For how can the mind be expected to attend to those instructions which are beyond its powers to conceive? and how can our conduct be influenced by those arguments, whose force we are destitute of abilities to discern?

THE subject which my friend was engaged in reading, on the evening to which I have above alluded, was, The folly and mischief of religious zeal, when not guided by the spirit of charity, and directed in its exertions by the rules of prudence: and though it was handled in a masterly and convincing manner, the style was far superior to the weak and puerile ideas of children.

IN hope, therefore, of engaging their reflections on the duties of life, by suiting the arguments to their present circumstances and comprehensions, I have engaged in the following work: and sincerely wish it may answer the purpose for which it was written.

COURSE OF LECTUREES

FOR

Sunday Evenings.

SUNDAY I.

ON A HABIT OF ATTENTION.

THOUGH there are many things, my dear, of which at present you are ignorant; yet you well know, that knowledge is only to be acquired by a desire to be informed; and if you do not endeavour to *listen* to those instructions which you receive either at church or at home, you certainly must lose the benefit of

improvement, and will still continue in a state of ignorance.

THOUGH, at present, you are incapable of understanding *every* thing that you may hear, yet this ability is not to be acquired by neglect: while you spend your time in play, and employ your thoughts on toys and trifles, such parts of a discourse as might be suited to your capacity, and calculated to enlighten your mind, will be passed over with equal negligence as the rest.

YOUNG as you are, you have been instructed, that there is a God who observes all your actions; you have been taught your duty to him as your Creator and Preserver: you know likewise what are your obligations to your fellow creatures; and that a regard to a right conduct, and the practice of virtue, is a duty that you owe to *yourself*.—It is a *part* therefore of the performance of those duties, to do all in your power to improve in knowledge; to learn every day more and more in what those obligations consist; what are the sins you should particularly endeavour to avoid, and the virtues you are most

called upon to practise. As you advance in years your opportunities of usefulness will be increased: but even at present you have *some* things incumbent upon you to observe; and the Almighty will be as watchful over *your* conduct, as over those who are your superiors in age.

EVERY state, my dear, has its particular duties to fulfil. To acquire a clear idea of what God expects from you at *this* period of your life, is what I now mean particularly to recommend; and to this end, you must listen with a design of improving, by the advice of your older friends. You must not allow yourself to be impatient when they reprove, or negligent when they would instruct you; nor must you on any account, if you design to render your behaviour pleasing to the Deity, forget the serious admonitions you receive; since in that case, you will resemble those hearers whom our Saviour describes in one of his parables, as receiving the word into stony ground, or into a barren soil, where, for want of earth, the seed which

was sown withered away. The meaning of which is, that what you may learn from reading, or your friends may be so kind as to teach you, will be of no use, unless you resolve to act as you are desired. A determined *obedience* to those instructions is therefore evidently your present duty; since, though you may have sufficient sense to comprehend what you are taught, it will never "spring up," or bring the fruits of virtue to perfection, unless it be sown in *good ground*:—unless you reflect so seriously on the consequence of your actions, as to resolve to observe the precepts of religion, and regulate your life by the directions of truth.

WHAT is above your comprehension, entreat your parents to explain; and if you endeavour to discover the sense of any author you may read, or any discourse you may attend to, you will find, that your abilities will be improved; and what might appear difficult to you upon a slight perusal, or a transient thought, will be more clearly understood upon mature reflection, and a serious and frequent consideration of the subject.—But as your mind is at pre-

sent too volatile to expect a continued attention, I shall conclude my present exhortation with the hope, that as the contents of this little work are such as are highly interesting, and of the utmost importance, you will favor them with a candid and an *attentive* perusal.

SUNDAY II.

ON TRUTH.

THE necessity of establishing a character for veracity is so obvious, that I shall perhaps rather offend you, by supposing there is ~~any~~ any need to recommend it. But as young persons, ~~in particular~~, are sometimes drawn into error by surprise, ~~I would warn you, my dear, to be upon your guard; as one deviation will be~~ ^{unseasonable. & even} attended with lasting consequences of evil.

THE fear of present shame, is, in general, a strong incentive to deceit: and to hide the neglect of a duty, or excuse the commission of an error, the aggravated guilt of a *lie* is added to the transgression. When an untruth is detected (as one time or other it will be) the character of sincerity is always suspected. In vain may you promise amendment, or assure your friends

of your repentance; the bond of reliance is broken; for who can give credit to the word of a *liar*? Those who have *once* deceived us, we are apt in future to treat with contempt. All confidence in them is abolished, till by a *long* and *steady* adherence to *truth*, they have retrieved their lost honor, and engaged us to renew our dependence upon them.

EVERY deviation from a known duty is dangerous; and to admit the *appearance* of evil, is, to verge toward the commission of a crime. Temptations to deny the truth may every day occur; and unless you resolutely determine to abide any inconvenience rather than forfeit your veracity, you will certainly be ensnared into the commission of this dangerous sin. In the fifth chapter of the second book of Kings, a striking history is recorded of the lie which *Gehazi*, the servant of the prophet *Elisba*, told his master concerning the gifts which he had received from *Naaman*, a noble *Syrian*, who had come to *Samaria*, to be healed by him of the leprosy, a sore and disagreeable disorder with which he had been long afflicted. This nobleman had been

informed by a little maid, whom the *Syrians* had taken captive in their wars with the children of *Israel*, that there was in her country, a prophet, who God had endued with power to heal diseases: to him she advised her master to apply for relief. The noble *Naaman* determined to try the experiment, and with a train of followers befitting his rank, and a recommendation from the King his master, set forward to make the attempt. When he arrived at *Samaria* he went immediately to the monarch of *Israel*, to whom his letter was addressed, and implored his assistance for his recovery. *Jehoram*, who reigned at that time, was exceedingly disturbed at the message, and imagined that the King of *Affyria*, with whom he was frequently at war, sought, by a request which it was out of his power to comply with, to make a pretence of quarrel; and accordingly rent his cloaths as a mark of his sorrow on the occasion.

Elisba, as soon as this action was told him, sent to *Jehoram*, with an enquiry to know why he had been so hasty and discontented? and to desire that *Naaman* might be sent to him, and

he should *know* that there was a prophet in *Israel*; who, by the assistance of God, could effect the difficult cure, which *Benhadad* had entreated the king to accomplish. In consequence of this message *Naaman* was dismissed to *Elijah*, who sent him word by his servant to go and wash seven times in *Jordan*, (one of the rivers of *Samaria*,) and he should be perfectly healed. The *Syrian* nobleman, who thought his rank, and the splendor of his equipage claimed a greater degree of respect, was offended that the prophet did not invite him into his house, put his hand on the place, and command a cure: and very foolishly argued, that the remedy prescribed was so simple that he imagined no benefit would arise from obeying it; that *Abana* and *Pharpar*, rivers of *Damascus* (his own city) were larger and better than all the waters of *Israel*; and therefore he might as well wash in them and be clean; and with this angry and dissatisfied disposition, would have left the city without trying the effect of the prophet's advice. But his attendants, with more reason, represented to him, that as he had taken the journey in expectation of relief, he had better *try* the efficacy of the waters which

were recommended, and that if he had been ordered some great and expensive mean, difficult to procure, and unpleasing in the application, he would, without hesitation, have joyfully complied; and it was certainly much more easy, when he was only told to wash and be clean. Convinced by these just and judicious arguments, he submitted to the method proposed, and to his astonishment and satisfaction, found himself immediately restored to health.

WITH the warmest sentiments of gratitude he then returns to the prophet, acknowledges himself a convert to the belief of the true God, and offers some rich presents as a return to *Eliša*, for the obligation, which by his means he had received. These, however, were generously refused; and *Naaman*, after pressing his acceptance of the gift, set forward, with a thankful heart, on his return.

BUT *Gehazi*, who waited on the prophet, and whose avarice repined at the benevolence of his master, determined that the *Syrian* should not so easily escape. He ran after the carriage, there-

fore, and being perceived by the grateful nobleman, he immediately stopped to receive his message, with an affectionate enquiry whether his master was well? *Gebazi*, with a ready falsehood, replied, that no accident had happened; but that two young men of the sons of the prophets, having unexpectedly arrived from Mount *Ephraim*, his master had sent him to beg for them, a talent of silver and two changes of raiment. This *Naaman* readily complies with, and desires his acceptance of *two* talents of silver, which were bound in two bags with the garments, and carried by his servant, before the treacherous *Gehazi*, who bestowed, that is, hid them in the house, and then returned to wait upon *Elijah*. The prophet, who was conscious of the iniquity of his servant, enquired where he had been? To which, with the most audacious appearance of innocence, he answered, "Thy servant went no whither." Shocked at the wickedness of this denial, the prophet at once confounds and punishes his guilt by this answer. "Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to

receive garments, and possessions? Therefore the leprosy of *Naaman* shall cleave unto thee and to thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence," adds the historian, "a leper as white as snow."

THIS story is an example, among many, of one fault being the occasion of another; and should teach you at all times to avoid doing a wrong action; since there is no certainty where the guilt or the evil may stop. When *Gehazi* first formed the covetous plan of wishing for some of the gifts which his master had rejected, he could find no way to accomplish his desire, but by the invention of a lie: and when, by the undeserved confidence of the *Syrian* Lord, he had procured the riches which he solicited, the temptation became still greater to conceal it from his master by a second falsehood.

BUT remember, my good young friend, whatever may be your inclination to deceive, or however necessary it may appear for your interest to disguise the truth, that although there is no *prophet* to discover your guilt, yet the same

God, who endued *Eliša* with that power, is ever present to observe and to punish your wickedness. Think therefore with yourself, when you are incited to deviate from the truth, that although you may escape detection from your friends, or those with whom you are connected, yet the awful question may be applied to you, "Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot?" That is, that however secret the lie may appear to be, however unsuspected you may at present escape; yet God, who is at all times the witness of every action, and is acquainted with every thought, will certainly, unless you sincerely repent, punish your crimes hereafter.

BEFORE the coming of *Christ*, God acted as the peculiar Governor of the *Jewish* nation: and as a future state was not then so clearly revealed, their laws were suited to the nature of their situation at that time. Hence you will find, that temporal punishments were assigned, and temporal rewards proposed, to engage their obedience: such as, that God would bless them

and their posterity with health and long life; with a fruitful land; with peace and plenty; if they behaved according to his commands; but if they acted wickedly, then he would destroy them; would give them to their enemies for slaves; would make them miserable, through ill health; and send the horrors of famine upon them; so that they should have nothing to eat. And therefore the punishment of *Gebazi*, in the present instance, is, that he and his children, if ever he had any, should suffer with the sore and shocking disorder of a leprosy; as a warning to others, not to be guilty of the like crimes. And the reason that this seemingly severe chastisement was to be continued to his children, might be; that when in after times people enquired, *why* this disorder afflicted all the race of *Gebazi*? they might be informed, that one of their progenitors had offended God by the wickedness of lying; and hence be taught the importance of an adherence to truth, and how unpleasing a contrary conduct is to the Divine Governor of the world.

As every example and every precept in the

Scriptures is written for your instruction, you should seriously consider, that if God so severely punished *Gehazi*, who had never had the blessing of that purer revelation, which *Christ* came into the world to make known ; you must not expect that he will be less displeased with you, although he may not think proper to punish you immediately. Nor is this sin confined to such instances as seem to be important in themselves : the crime may be aggravated indeed by circumstances ; but if it be occasioned by an accident the most trifling, still as an untruth it is extremely wicked, and the commission will undoubtedly meet its deserved condemnation.

Will you, therefore, ever be persuaded to lose the approbation of your friends, the satisfaction of an approving conscience, and above all, do a deed which will displease the Almighty, to save yourself from a present inconvenience, or to acquire a present benefit ? If you reflect seriously upon the subject, can any thing be worth such a sacrifice ? Will any gratification recompence you for the miserable consciousness of

having swerved from your duty in this instance; for the dread of detection; the fear of shame; and, if discovered, the certain loss of your honor and reputation? Could you bear to have your fidelity liable to suspicion? and not to obtain the credit of belief in other affairs, where you might be more sincere? Recollect these arguments then, when you are tempted to transgress; and beg of God to fortify your mind with strength to resist temptation.

Be assured, that if you have committed an error, the most noble reparation will be to acknowledge it. No one is absolutely perfect; but it is despicable and mean to deny a fault, and to hide a failing, at the expence of truth. The motive, if it be to save your reputation, is highly erroneous; since honesty, upon all occasions, is the only true foundation of lasting respect. Other offences may meet with more compassion and excuse; but a *liar* will always be branded with infamy, and his character meet with detestation and contempt.

SUNDAY III.

ON READING THE SCRIPTURES.

IF you read the Bible without attention, think it a hardship, and regard it as a task, you will find no delight, nor gain any improvement from the study of it. Consider that it is the book which you should constantly peruse, to teach you your duty to God, and to instruct you in what he has commanded and what forbidden to be done.

THE same laws which he enjoined to the Jews, he requires now of *Christians*, except those which were of a ceremonious sort; such as their sacrifices, their going up to Jerusalem, and others of the like kind, which your parents will teach you to distinguish. But the Ten Commandments remain in the same force; and God will be as much displeased with those who dis-

obey them now, as when they were first given to *Moses* at *Mount Sinai*. When therefore you take the name of God in vain, either by swearing, or by what is too commonly practised by those who esteem themselves thoughtful and religious, by repeating the words of *Lord*, *God*, or *Christ*; and calling upon their Maker as an exclamation, which they use without reflection, upon every trifling occasion: this is to break the third commandment.—Nor is an ill-tempered sullenness, or insolent rudeness to your parents, when they kindly offer you their advice, or endeavour to instruct you, less a breach of the fifth.

To take what is not your own, or to pilfer from your companions any thing which belongs to them, because it suits your inclination; will certainly come under the guilt of *stealing*. For wickedness is as much deserving of condemnation, if exercised in circumstances which are indifferent in themselves, as when excited by more powerful temptations; since it is the *intention* of the *mind*, which constitutes the *guilt* of an action: and if you take a toy or a trinket, knowing it to belong to another, you are certainly guilty

of a breach of that commandment which ordains,
"Thou shalt not steal."

To desire the possessions of your neighbours in an undue degree; to wish for their cloaths, their money, or any thing which they possess, so as to be dissatisfied with your own; is a violation of that law which forbids you to covet: and so of the rest, which are not less binding for having been long delivered; but will ever remain of eternal force and obligation.

THAT God who was the ruler and governor of the *Israelites*, though he does not now so visibly lead his people by the fiery pillar which gave light to them, but was a cloud of darkness to their enemies, is still the same God; is equally watchful over the *Christians*; observes their obedience with approbation, and is present to every secret thought of the most youthful of his children. He beholds every struggle between duty and inclination, and will reward them for every sacrifice which they make to virtue.

WHEN they are excited by the examples

which were recorded for their instruction, to do well, and to imitate what is right; they may be certain, though observed by no earthly eye, "that they shall in no wise lose their reward; for their Father who seeth in secret, himself will reward them openly."

WHEN, therefore, you are permitted to read the Scriptures, endeavour to attend seriously to them: and what you do not understand, desire some of your older friends to explain. Remember what they tell you, and think of it when you meet with the same passages again. This will make you find greater pleasure in the employment; for it is tiresome to peruse any thing which we do not comprehend.

BUT, perhaps, you will be apt to imagine, that the commands of the Almighty are not designed to affect you: that your *youth* will excuse you from obeying them; and therefore, that it is of little consequence to take such a degree of trouble. In this opinion you will be much mistaken. It is necessary to *know* your duty before you can *practise* it; and if you take no pains to

enquire what God expects from you; I am afraid you will take still less, to *do* what he commands.

Samuel, though but a child, was favored by the Lord, with a revelation of what was to befall the family of *Eli*; for it is the *goodness* of the *heart* that will be regarded by God, and not the *age* of those who pray to him. He hath enjoined you to seek him early in the days of your youth; and therefore you need never be discouraged with the idea that, as a *child*, you are but of little consequence; for God watcheth over the thoughts of every infant mind, and is well pleased when he beholds the earnest endeavours of the *least* of his creatures to be *good*, and to deserve his favor.

You are not to expect that your piety will make you distinguished in the same manner as *Samuel*, because he was designed to be a prophet; and no one, since the death of *Christ* and his Apostles, have *that* gift bestowed upon them. But this instance may convince you, that the favor of God, and his observance of human actions, is not confined to any particular age, but

that all are equally the care of his providence, and share alike in his notice.

If, then, you endeavour to learn your duty, and are resolved to practise it, young as you are, you may be capable of doing *much* good in the world. Your acquaintance will be incited from your example, to imitate what they will find every one ready to recommend. Your parents will be made happy by the pleasure of seeing you such as they wish you to become; and will be thankful to God for the blessing of such a good child. They will be always ready to trust your promises, because they know, that when *they* are absent you will consider yourself as in *God's* presence; and therefore will not do any thing that is wrong, while you remember that he is the awful witness of your actions. And shall you not rejoice, my dear, to gain the confidence of those friends whom you love, and who are so kind and so attentive to you?

I am sure this consideration will have weight with every worthy mind; and a good child must rejoice to see the delight of an affectionate fa-

ther, when he surveys with pleasure the improvements of his beloved offspring; or the raptures of a tender mother, when she perceives any new instance of virtue in the object of her fondest regard.

THE *happiness* of parents, my young friend, is so connected with the *goodness* of their children, that if they are undutiful, negligent, and wicked, it must give such affliction and trouble, as no other comforts can counterbalance. Can you bear the thought of making *them* unhappy, whose whole aim in life is to promote *your* felicity? Can you receive with sullenness and ill-humour that advice which is designed entirely for your good? Recollect how anxiously they endeavour to provide for all your wants: to their kindness you are indebted for your food, your cloathing, and every convenience which you enjoy. And though this care and attention is *their* duty; to respect, to love, to reverence, and obey them is no less *yours*; and what God will as undoubtedly expect from you.

To be obedient to your parents, is one of

the first obligations which you can perform in life; and is the only return in your power to make for those continual favors which you daily receive. "Honor then thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

SUNDAY IV.

ON SOCIAL DUTY.

WHEN God made the world, his wisdom gave to mankind a power of speech, reason, and reflection, which he bestowed on no other creature; and, as human nature is subject to many wants, and is too weak *singly* to provide for itself, the Almighty has ordained that we should live together; and that numbers, by helping each other, should procure those conveniences which no man *alone* could obtain.

THIS union, my dear, is called a state of society; and every child who is born is termed a member, or one of that society. That is, another addition to the number of people in the world: and every person has some duties to perform, which are known by the name of

Social duties; because if it were possible for you to live quite alone, those duties would not be exerted. For, had you not parents, you could not obey them; had you not brothers or sisters, you could not love them; had you not friends, or instructors, you could not be thankful and attentive to them; and if you knew no persons who were poor and wretched, you could not be kind and charitable.

WHILE you are young it becomes you to be dutiful to your superiors; and whatever is the station in which Providence has thought fit to place you, to endeavour, by every kind attention in your power to promote the happiness of those connected with you. Each instance, therefore, of sullenness when you are reproved, of anger when disappointed, and petulance and ill-humour when you meet with contradiction, is a certain failure in your duty as a social being. Whenever you are tempted to offend in this respect, recollect that your conduct is noticed by a higher power than those who gave you offence; that most probably the advice which you disapprove, is entirely designed to

promote your welfare; that though such admonitions may be wounding to your pride, the sure mark of a noble mind is to improve by every hint which is afforded to guide it through life: and be assured, the time *will come* when experience will alter your present opinions, and convince you of those errors of which you now refuse to be corrected.

BUT even admitting that your *friends* should be to blame, allowing that they should treat you with severity, or mistake your motive, and blame you with ill-nature: in such a case you must console yourself with the reflection, that however *others* may provoke you, *you* will be calm, and govern your temper; and that such a conduct will insure to you the approbation of that God, whom no outward appearance can deceive, and no weakness mislead; but that his goodness will recompence every attempt which is made, and assist every endeavour to excel in virtue. From the faults of others you should endeavour to correct your own; and while you suffer unmerited ill-humour, remember the

same bad qualities will produce equal abhorrence in yourself.

EVERY individual, be his rank in life ever so obscure, can at the most early age contribute, by his good behaviour, to the felicity of those about him; and to ease the burden of care, and give assistance to each other, is to promote that wise and benevolent design which our Maker designed in the creation of man.

As this is a state of trial, you will meet with no character without imperfection; and therefore when you discover any failings in those who have the care of your education, you are not to retort with insolence upon them, and say, "they require those virtues from you, which they themselves fail to practise." For though undoubtedly, in every instance, the teacher ought to set an example of excellence to the pupil; yet such is human weakness, that those whose better knowledge calls for superior virtue, those whom we may expect to act nobly upon every occasion, will sometimes unhappily disappoint our expectations, and behave in such a manner

as to forfeit, in that instance, the esteem of their friends, and incur their own reproach.

BUT in such a situation, if you are convinced that those whom you are bound to obey, have not kept in mind the precepts which they have taught you; remember that perhaps there may be *many* reasons to plead in their excuse. That it may be, when young, they were not blessed with those high advantages of instruction and improvement which you enjoy: or that if they were so favored, they might *then* disregard what they *now* find to their cost they have reason to lament their neglect of.

MAKE use, therefore, of *their* experience to act more wisely; but never regard it as any excuse for errors in yourself, much less that it gives you a right to be saucy and irreverent in your behaviour. What, upon serious reflection, they advise you to observe, however you may fancy they deviate from it themselves, you may be certain is for your good; and you should consider, that as they are older,

and do not, it is most probable, tell you all the motives for their actions; so those instances which to you may appear blameable, would perhaps, were it proper to acquaint you with the reasons of their conduct, fully clear them from your censure.

SUNDAY V.

ON BROTHERLY LOVE.

THE near connection which subsists between children of the same family should incite them to mutual kindness; and yet it is too often observed in life, that those who are most nearly united by interest and duty, are the least engaged by friendship and affection. The most trifling circumstances often produce events of high importance; and if you would perform your social duties aright, if you mean to act up to the high character of a *christian*, you must remember, that it is necessary to keep a constant guard over your temper, and to be strictly attentive to every occurrence of domestic life. If your relations are kind and obliging, it will be highly ungrateful to impose upon their goodness, or take any unfair advantage of their tenderness. For surely nothing can be more

ungenerous than to behave ill to those who are *meek*, because you know they will not resent it.

THE

LET not those who through tenderness bear with your faults, have, for *that reason*, the more faults to bear with. That is a mean disposition which will only be governed by fear or by resentment. A noble mind will endeavour to promote the happiness of all around it; and why should you suffer the captiousness of ill-humour to destroy your own serenity, and disturb the peace of your nearest and best friends? If God has done so much to promote the good of mankind, surely he will punish those who oppose his benevolent designs, by their perverse dispositions.

“LET brotherly love then continue undisturbed;” and never do, or say any thing with a design of giving pain to those with whom you are. A *word*, or a *look* of unkindness, may cause much uneasiness to a brother or sister; remember, therefore, the charitable rule by which our Saviour enjoins *his* disciples to proceed, and do to *them* as you, in

the like situation, would wish they should act by you.

IN this life, numberless troubles will unavoidably arise; but he who is willing to take offence at trifles, or inconsiderately give pain to others, will add greatly to the burden of sorrow, and must expect to suffer the miseries which his conduct deserves.

How severely did the envious and unkind brethren of the innocent *Joseph* lament their barbarous behaviour! And though God may not at the present moment appear to inflict his vengeance on those who are petulant and ill-tempered; yet be assured that he *notices* every *passionate expression*, that he sees every act of malignity and spite; and that the *envious*, the *sullen*, the *mo-rose* child will not escape unpunished. He alone can be happy in this world, he alone will be blessed in a future state, who endeavours to be *good tempered*. “Blessed are the *merciful*, for they shall obtain *mercy*. Blessed are the *peace-makers*, for they shall be called the children of God.” Like their Almighty Father they delight to pro-

mote happiness around them; and in their narrow sphere, in the small circle of their own family, among their brothers and sisters, their relations, or acquaintance, to diffuse and excite a spirit of kindness and affection.

THE sweet influence, my young readers, be assured, will spread from heart to heart: others will catch a habit of compliance from you; and your example will rouse them to a sense of emulation, and to a generous desire not to be outdone in good nature. Let then your contest be, *not* who shall *overcome* in a dispute; but who shall first *yield* to the other, and set the first example of self-denial.

FROM the moment of your rising till you lie down again to repose, you will constantly meet with some opportunity to shew your good humour, or exercise your peevish and vexatious talents. As I have before told you, as the Scriptures continually remind you, *every* action is observed by God; for *every word* we must, at the day of judgment, give account: remember, therefore, how important an object it is to be kind,

complying, obliging, civil; not when others are cross or peevish, " rendering them railing (that is, ill-tempered language) for railing, nor evil for evil; but contrariwise, blessing: knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." Which is intended to instruct you, that as you are called to the blessings of the *Christian* covenant, so you should act worthy of that profession; and though such behaviour as railing, or doing evil, may be, in some measure, excusable in those who are ignorant and uninstructed, yet that *Christians* who have read the Gospel, and been taught by the precepts and example of *Christ*, can plead no excuse for their bad behaviour; that it is a part of their engagement " to love one another;" without observing which, they cannot hope for the privileges or blessing of the new, or *Christian* covenant; " for hereby" says our Saviour, " shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one toward another :" and though this was intended in a more extensive sense, to take in every one we either *know* or *bear* of, yet surely it is in a peculiar manner needful toward those with whom we *live*; and therefore whose happiness is so

much more nearly concerned in our good or bad behaviour.

TAKE care then, my young friend, how you suffer yourself to be fretful and discontented; and because you have the *power* to be ill-natured, because you can tease others with impunity, therefore think you have a *right* so to do. Be assured, that every act, however trifling, which is designed to provoke your companions, will be the cause of great unhappiness to yourself. While on the contrary, every exertion of kindness, civility, and good humour, will afford you such inward satisfaction, in the approbation of an approving conscience, as will be found one of the highest enjoyments which this world can bestow.

SUNDAY VI.

ON ENVY.

THERE is nothing more opposite to brotherly love than the indulgence of a disposition to envy. Where this evil passion once takes possession of the mind, it destroys the benevolent influence of good-nature, and renders those who indulge it a torment to others, and a misery to themselves.

Envvy arises from a consciousness of wanting either that genius, or those talents, which are the possession of another. Instead of exciting us to imitate what we think is agreeable, it inclines us to depreciate or undervalue their goodness or accomplishments. But beware, my young reader, how you give the least indulgence to this hateful disposition; examine your own

heart impartially, lest it should steal upon you undiscovered.

WHEN you hear any of your relations or companions praised for their improvements, if you feel a dislike to the subject, and are unwilling to join in their commendation, be assured that it proceeds from *envy*. Or, if you try to discover their failings, with a view to mention them the next time you hear them admired: if you find a desire to say, to be sure, they are *good*, in *this* instance; but in *that* they are *worse* than myself; in *some* particulars they excel, but in *others* are very defective: if this be what you are inclined to say, or to think, recollect that these are the suggestions of *envy*; such feelings the beginning of temptation; and resolve to be more generous for the future. Remember, that if the merit of others gives you pain, it is because you are inferior to them; and instead of being *displeased* at their goodness, resolve to become *like* them.

IF, for instance, your companion be commended for sweetness of temper, reflect that it

is in your own power to become equally amiable. Determine the next time you are vexed, provoked, or disappointed, to bear it with patience and good humour. Endeavour to deserve equal praise, and you will most probably meet with it. But suppose, from a difference in circumstances, or situation, *that* should not happen to be the case, still will you have a higher consolation to reward you. God Almighty, the great Father and watchful Observer of all his creatures, will be pleased with your endeavours to do your duty; and his favor will be a better recompence than any other advantage you could obtain. You will likewise secure your own happiness, by avoiding that train of disagreeable reflections which even attend on an envious disposition.

THOSE whom we envy we cannot love; we rejoice at any accident which interrupts their prosperity; and it gives us pleasure to see them guilty of such failings as may disgrace their good qualities. What a shocking, what a miserable temper! yet such is its real representation.

To perceive the hateful appearance of vice, you must survey it in others, and remember what you think disgusting in *them*, will be equally wicked in *yourself*. *David* was conscious how blameable it was to take the poor man's lamb; though without remorse he sent for the wife of *Uriah* when he had caused her husband to be slain, by exposing him to the sword of the children of *Ammon*.

God is the witness of every intention. If you join in praising others, that you may have a better opportunity to expose their failings; he will punish your hypocrisy with severe vengeance. There is a meanness in *envy*, which checks the exertion of every noble affection. It is the vice of little minds which grudges merit its deserved reward, and repines that any one is happy but itself. Endeavour to rise above its low suggestions; remember that *others* being great, generous, or accomplished, does not argue that *you* may not have the same good qualities. Few persons excel in *every* thing: all may, if they please, in *something*. Cultivate your own talents with care; but he

contented to let others have their share of applause.

If God has bestowed upon you any personal beauty, be thankful for the gift; but consider it is a dangerous blessing. If it raise your vanity, the end is defeated for which it was lent you. The advantages of persons are no further valuable than as they render you more pleasing to others; but if they excite a spirit of contention, affectation, and pride, they will make you despicable in the eyes of persons of real sense, and prove a misfortune rather than a happiness. On the other hand, should it be your lot to be deformed, disfigured, or disagreeable, let it not raise your *envy* at the graces which others may possess: do not be uneasy upon the subject; but consider that these are trifling distinctions; that to be *virtuous* and *amiable* is the only thing of importance. God knows best what is proper for all his creatures; and if therefore he has seen it right to deny you the advantage of a comely person, be assured, that there are wise reasons why you should.

be contented, and not wish for any thing that is withheld from you.

PERHAPS, had you been possessed of the beauty you so much desire, it would have made you vain and disagreeable; would have engaged too much of your thoughts, your time, and attention: *vice* only will make you really deformed.

If you are treated unkindly, or ridiculed by your companions, it reflects dishonor upon *them*, not discredit upon *you*. Where misfortunes of this kind are not owing to your own fault, never regard them as any disgrace. *Virtue*, not *beauty*, is what God will regard, and what the good will esteem. Be kind, therefore to others: be good tempered, and endeavour to do every thing, to the best of your abilities, but never envy what your companions possess.

As this life is only a state of trial, God has not thought fit to bestow his gifts to all in equal proportion. But whatever may be your lot, he expects that you should be contented,

and not repine because *others* appear to have more advantages. Nay, he has thought fit to enjoin us to this virtue by an absolute command. “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor *any* thing that is his.”

IT is wrong to wish for the goods of fortune, or to desire a change of situation; since no one can tell the secret cares which another may experience, and the very person whom you regard with the highest degree of envy may be much more unhappy than yourself.

A *FINE* house, an elegant equipage, fashionable cloaths, and a beautiful person, do not any of them, or altogether, bestow *happiness*: and the poorest child who is humble, gentle, willing to be taught, and does the best it can to perform its duty, will be found to enjoy pleasures which *riches* cannot give; and such as can only result from a *good heart*.

BE sincere, therefore, in your words, gene-

rous, open-hearted, kind to your equals, obedient to your superiors; preserve a constant sense of God upon your mind, and act so as to merit his approbation; then will you be above the meanness of *envy*, you will have no temptation to such a hateful passion, and you will obtain as much real felicity as can be enjoyed in this world.

SUNDAY VII.

ON PRIDE.

THIS vice has been often said to be the fault of little minds. The meaning of which is, that people of real sense and merit, esteem every thing according to its worth; and therefore consider riches, beauty, or rank, as accidental advantages, which can reflect no honor on the possessor.

EVERY blessing which we enjoy is derived from infinite goodness; they should always engage our *gratitude*, but never excite our *pride*. When we compare the situation, talents, or enjoyments of others with our own, the greater satisfaction we receive, the more ardent should be our thankfulness.

THAT we are superior to our neighbour, is no merit in *us*, but increases our obligation to

that God who has so liberally endowed us with his gifts. Prosperity is by no mean a state of security. Innumerable dangers attend on those whose circumstances are exalted: they are too often inclined to forget their duty, to grow fond of pleasure, and to esteem dress, show, and ostentation, beyond the noblest virtues of the heart. But it is impossible to describe the meanness and guilt of such a conduct.

SUPPOSE yourself to be dressed by the hand of elegance, and that your person is so agreeably formed as to inspire pleasure in every beholder; nay, allow that you have all those outward graces which the polish of refined manners, and a good education can bestow; still are not these advantages any just foundation for pride. Though you may excel your companions in dancing, in music, in painting, or in any, or all of those accomplishments in which it is praise-worthy to succeed; yet a haughty consciousness of superiority, and a disdain of those who have been less fortunate, or less capable of exertion, will spoil the fair fruit of these *otherwise* delightful

bloffoms, and render you the object of abhorrence and contempt.

VIRTUE is the one thing needful. We may be careful and troubled about many things, but that is the essential part. Every perfection, every distinction which has not that for its support, will be of no avail when death shall mix your body with the common dust, and your soul shall return to the God who gave it.

ENDEAVOUR therefore now to anticipate, by reflection, that period which will certainly arrive. Recollect when you display your finery to others, to excite their envy, or inspire their reverence, that true respect is the tribute paid to real merit alone: and however you may raise the stare of astonishment, or cause the sigh of vexation by this gratification of your pride; yet it is only in the idea of the weak and unreflecting, that you will have even this poor kind of homage paid to your vanity.

Is there is one who, like *Mordecai*, does not seem to observe your fancied superiority, you

will suffer all the pangs of the ambitious *Haman*. Every comfort of life will be disregarded; and each former satisfaction afford no pleasure, while you consider this vexation, as “*Mordecai the Jew* sitting in the king’s gate.”

PRIDE is ever an enemy to instruction; it will incline you to fancy your judgment better informed than your teachers; and, in consequence, render you angry and petulant at instruction, and quite impatient at reproof. “Surely *I* should know best,” is the language of the proud upon every occasion. Thus do they exclude the possibility of improvement, and sit down obstinate in ignorance, and vain of error.

THE vice of which we are now speaking is detestable at *every* age; but is more particularly disgusting in *youth*, where the want of experience must add to the weakness of folly, and render presumption more glaring. Subdue then, with the utmost vigilance, the first approaches of this dangerous vice; it will increase in its strength by imperceptible degrees. Apply seriously to your Heavenly Father for

assistance; be resolute and watchful over this spiritual enemy.

When you find the emotions of resentment arise on being told of your fault; when you are angry with the reproofing friend; and still more, when you determine not to heed the kind reprehension; then, my young friend, it is time to tremble for your virtue. Do not encourage the wrong inclination. Do not say then censure is unjust, nor seek to vindicate your error with any plausible pretext. Excuses may deceive others; and what is worse, may deceive yourself. But, my dear child, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. Examine yourself seriously, perhaps you have been to blame; do not be too hasty in your decision; self-love is a terrible deceiver. Your parents are better judges of your conduct; they hear with less prejudiced ears; they see with more impartial eyes, and yet feel that anxiety for your character, which will incline them to make every proper allowance when they think it necessary to censure your conduct.

A NOBLE mind is never above the acknowledgment of a fault; candidly own that you have erred, and resolve upon future amendment. This in every case is the best possible satisfaction; the path of humility will conduct you to perfection; the obstinacy of pride must render you unworthy of esteem. Its intention is self-defeated; it seeks respect, but involves itself in disgrace. Pride aims at superiority, and claims commendation as its due; but it is subject to continual disappointment; as every one will delight to mortify those who have too high an opinion of their own consequence.

REMEMBER at all times, "that human excellence is but comparative;" and that however exalted you may fancy your rank, your fortune, or your acquirements, there are others, though unknown, or unacknowledged by your vanity, " who excel you as much as you fancy you excel the meanest."

SUNDAY VIII.

ON DECEIT.

MANY a person, whose conscience would be shocked by absolutely denying the *truth*, and affirming what they knew to be a *lie*; will yet allow in themselves a habit of *deceit*, without remorse or uneasiness.

EVERY crime is undoubtedly capable of *aggravation*, and the offender may be rendered more or less guilty from the attending circumstances. If falsehood is employed to injure a neighbour's reputation, to engage a companion to the commission of evil, or to deprive another of his just right, it is rendered still more inexcusable. But do not be deceived by appearances: *deceit* is *forbidden*; and though the motive which inspires it may be generous, there is no intention that can sanctify a *crime*.

Ananias and *Sapphira* were struck dead, yet they told a *part* of what was the truth, they had sold the land for a greater price than they were willing to acknowledge to the apostles; and there are minds who would scarcely have felt the reproaches of conscience upon such an occasion. Too many young people, do not scruple, where their interest or pleasure is concerned, to hide some circumstances of the truth, while they reveal others; and by this mean think they are exculpated from the charge of lying. But the awful example abovementioned was recorded for our instruction, and intended to convey to us a lesson of high importance. That the Almighty, who is a God of *truth*, and who must know our smallest deviations, will not acquit the guilty; and that however the liar may be spared for the present, yet there is a *future* day of retribution, when at the last and final judgment, every transgression shall meet with its deserved punishment.

To speak on any subject with a design to mislead your hearer, to reveal so much of the *truth* as is requisite to *deceive*, and to be silent

about every circumstance which would give a just information, is in effect, though you may not utter a word of falsehood, a premeditated lie in *act.* It must require thought, contrivance, and care; and surely where these are necessary to conceal your design, you as much intend to cheat the person you apply to, as if you affirmed what you knew was an untruth.

Is not this, my young friend, to pervert the powers of language? Can you *believe* a person who has once deceived you? Can you rely on his word who has broken his promise, or who, by some mean subterfuge, some artful evasion, has taken advantage of your greater honesty and candour?

THE path of truth is always open, unembarrassed and safe: the ways of falsehood are intricate, difficult, and perplexed. The deceiver is ever unprepared with a reply to the most simple question; he must guard against every possible demand, is always subject to the shame of discovery, and to the hesitation of conscious disguise.

The noble minded, on the contrary, who have no mean secret to conceal, who are unapprehensive of reproach, and unintimidated with the fear of detection, may speak with all the freedom of truth, and are entitled to unbounded confidence. They have no occasion for a multitude of promises, or for solemn asservations. Their simple word is sufficient to obtain credit, and they are trusted without the shadow of a doubt.

THERE is another species of this crime which is practised without any further intention than that of raising astonishment. In reciting a story, such persons allow themselves to exaggerate the truth, and make their histories pleasing by the addition of circumstances which never happened. Such tales of fiction may amuse for a while, and occasion that degree of *wonder* which they are designed to excite; but *time* will soon discover their falsehood; and the relater of them must from that period lose the credit of belief. In vain may he become afterward more circumspect, it will be long before he can re-establish his reputation. However he may on some occasions be really sincere, his conversation will be attended to

without confidence, and what he affirms be received with doubt and mistrust.

SUCH will be the evil consequences of deceit where it is the most innocent; and surely it would pain a generous mind to be the object of suspicion but for a moment. What can indicate greater meanness, or be more contemptible, than a character on which we have no reliance? or what can convey a more despicable idea than to hear it said, "He *told* me so, but I do not believe him?" Were there no motives of religious duty, even policy would dispose a person to be sincere, since nothing generous, amiable, or great, is ever expected from him who is known to *deceive*. Every duty of life must be interrupted where *doubt* is suffered to prevail; the professions of friendship may be suspected, where truth does not actuate the heart.

WHAT respect can be given to that advice which we are not certain is offered with sincerity? But the person *assures* us of his veracity: it may be so, yet the assurance of those who sometimes deceive is no proof. How then can they

offer stronger conviction? It is out of their power: where their *word* is suspected there is no surer bond of reliance.

THE scriptures call the Devil "the Father of lies," and assure us, "that all liars shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." Which is designed to express to us, that they will certainly be partakers of that future severe punishment which is prepared for the wicked in another life.

FEAR, Vanity, and Pride are the chief causes of deceit. To avert an expected evil you may be tempted to the denial of truth, or to a mean equivocation, which is much the same in effect; but in the practice of *virtue* our way is certain. Be determined always to do what is *right*, and expect the event without apprehension. Difficulties may arise to the good, but they cannot suffer from *remorse*. If they experience some present inconvenience, it will be soon over-past; and then they will have no regret in looking back on their conduct; Heaven will approve the struggles of virtue, and their character will rise from every trial.

TEMPTATIONS to evil are no excuse for our failings. How will piety be known if it be not tried? The merit of truth consists in avowing it in every circumstance, and in suffering all things rather than betray our integrity. Nor is there less danger to a youthful mind from the indulgence of vanity. A desire of appearing superior either in talents or accomplishments, is frequently a powerful motive in some to pretend to more knowledge than they possess. Hence they are led to deprecate others, and out of a vain pride to put on an appearance of superiority, to which they are certain they have no just pretensions. This haughtiness of mind will make them deny the most convincing arguments, and while they feel that they are to blame, dispose them obstinately to persist in error, and to dispute the most clear conviction, even at the expence of truth as well as reason. Disgusted if they are opposed, their vanity will never acknowledge a fault; and if you ask them whether they are not convinced, they will sooner lie, than candidly confess it; not considering, that modesty, truth, and an ingenuous acknowledgment, is the best atonement for human frailty, and will

entitle those who possess such engaging qualities to every allowance of candor and generosity.

THE pride of wishing to appear rich and great, is likewise in many respects a temptation to deceive. Whatever we are ashamed of, we have a desire to hide: and some young and uninformed minds forget the distinction between things which are proper objects of contempt, and those that become so only from their mistaken ideas. All vice, every deviation from virtue, and every mean or base action, are the only just subjects of *Shame*: and hence it must follow, that to be in indigent circumstances, to be dressed in plain cloaths, or to be in any respect inferior to your companions, is no reason for your suffering such a painful sensation; but, if you make an apology which is *untrue*, and would hide your real situation by deceit, that is a sufficient cause to call forth the blushes of shame, and will make you despicable indeed in the esteem of persons of real worth. Be persuaded, therefore, always to appear in your true character.

AIM not at things beyond your reach. A

good heart is an object worthy of admiration in every station, and in all circumstances. Let *truth* be your guide through each scene of your existence. Maintain a sacred regard to that principle alike in your thoughts, your words, and your actions. Disdain even the appearance of falsehood, nor allow the image of deceit a place in your mind. This resolution will establish your reputation on the firmest basis. You will have no fear of any private enquiries, of any secret discovery; but open, frank, candid, and honest, will receive the confidence of all with whom you are connected. And, as the last and most glorious of all motives, will be entitled to the approbation of your Creator and Preserver; of that God who is styled, **The God of Truth.**

SUNDAY IX.

ON PRAYER

THE observance of this duty is so necessary to your happiness in this life; and so needful to prepare you for the next, that I would wish with the greatest earnestness to enforce it.

You have been taught that it is right to address your prayers every day to the God who made you, to express your thanks for his blessings, and to beg the continuance of his protection: but though you may observe this custom without the least omission, recollect whether your *thoughts* accompany your *words*; whether in the form which you have been taught to utter, you do not repeat the *sounds* without attention to the *sense*. When you beg that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven, do you

consider that it is a part of *that will*, that you should *pray* in sincerity and truth?

Do you reflect, that the Almighty in a particular manner watches your thoughts; and will not accept the words which praise his mercy, unless the *heart* that offers them is grateful and obedient? Do not, therefore, consider your morning and evening prayers as a part of the ceremony of dressing or undressing, to be performed in the same careless and indifferent manner; but remember, that it ought to be a *serious* and *solemn* address to God, that you are going to commend yourself to his protection through the course of the day, or the hours of the night: that in the one case, you should beg of him not to leave you to fall into temptation; but to guard you from the commission of wickedness, to strengthen your mind to continue in the paths of truth, virtue, and obedience; to thank him for his care of you from any evil accident during the night, and that you are again awake in health and safety.

Such reflections as these should occupy your thoughts in prayer, not the vain and trifling ideas of your dress, your amusements, nor even your learning. Every thing has its proper season; but surely such imaginations are not suited to the time of *devotion*. If you accustom yourself always to recollect before you begin, on what subject, and to whom you are going to speak, it will make you more serious and attentive; but if with the wild and dissipated spirits of mirthful play, you heedlessly run from your sports, throw yourself on your knees, and *gabble* over your prayers as if it were a continuation of the same nonsense you have been engaged in; it is not to be expected that your attention can be great; or that God, who sees your *heart*, can accept of such petitions.

THE best christians find it difficult with all their care, to keep their minds so fixed, as the holiness and goodness of the Deity demand in such a solemn duty. Surely, therefore, it must require pains to be taken by a child, whose thoughts are still more unsettled, to confine them to the serious subject. Let me advise

you then to consider, for what end it is that you pray at all? Whether you do not hope that God would bless you? that he would give you health? that he would enable you to improve in goodness? that your sins may be forgiven? and that after this life is ended, you may rise from the dead, to enjoy everlasting happiness in heaven?

I CANNOT but suppose you really desire all these blessings: I am sure you must wish for them. But can you imagine that your Creator will grant your request, when you do not know what it is that you ask? And, if you will acknowledge the truth, I dare say, *many* a time you have risen from your devotions without being conscious of a word you have uttered.

To those who pray with sincerity, that is, are attentive, and *think* of what they are about, many promises are made in scripture. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availleth much," says the apostle. And be assured, that the prayer which is offered up in the best

manner you can, will be heard; though from the lips of a *child*. God is no respecter of persons; nor does he regard the *age* of his worshippers. He will grant every proper petition to those who are of sufficient understanding to *intend* right, and who do their endeavour to perform his will. It is not the *swords*, but the *attention* that will please God. If you desire to be good, you must entreat the divine assistance, that you may be able to resist temptation, that you may improve in wisdom, and in virtue.

God is the best of all Beings: therefore, by your prayers you do not make *him* more willing to do you good, for he is at all times desirous of your happiness; but, by becoming more obedient, and by asking for those blessings in a *proper* manner, *you* are better disposed to receive them and use them as you ought; and, therefore, are more deserving of God's favor. For none who have been at prayer with seriousness and devotion, can go immediately and be guilty of any great wickedness, at least, it is not probable they should; as it will certainly make them more

apt to recollect the presence of God, and more careful to obey his commands.

Nor are you only to be thus watchful over your thoughts in *private*, and suppose that *public* prayer will give a sanction to your roving imagination. When you enter the temple of the Almighty, it is, or *ought* to be, to offer up your solemn petitions before him, in union with numbers of your fellow creatures, who are all professedly met together for the same purpose. Can you therefore imagine at *such* a time, and on *such* an occasion, that your thoughts should be engaged by past amusements, or by plans of future pleasure? That you should indulge yourself in the vain observation of dress and vanity; and survey, with an eye of scrutiny, every ornament of those around you?

Do you consider, that such sacred seasons are designed to improve your heart, to animate your devotion, to exalt your piety to God, and to instruct you in your duty to man? What excuse therefore can you offer to your Maker for the

abuse of such advantages? An account will be expected at the day of judgment of every such neglect.

THINK of this in time, my young friend; and do not, by contracting an early habit of inattention, render your amendment more difficult. "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth;" as you increase in years, endeavour to improve in virtue; present the Almighty with the first fruits of an innocent heart, uncorrupted by the bad examples of the world. Offer up your fervent petitions as the grateful effusions of an early sacrifice, which he will accept with peculiar favor. The cares of future life will render this attention a more difficult, though not a less necessary duty; but if you accustom the mind to serious reflection, to a due consideration of the awful presence of that Being whom you approach to worship; if you strive to banish every vain idea, by recollecting, that he observes your most secret thoughts, and that your prayers, if *unthinkingly* rehearsed, will become an abomination, will be *displeasing* to him: in such circumstances, you will habitually

accustom yourself to seriousness in your devotion. But this is not an advantage which is easily attained. You must *persevere* in this course if you design that it should succeed; and by previous preparation, by reading and supplication, endeavour to strengthen your mind against the powerful temptation of a wandering imagination. Our thoughts are at all times difficult to restrain; every object is apt to inspire some new idea, which gives rise to others, more and more foreign to the sacred subject which ought solely to employ them.

BUT all that is *difficult* is not *impossible*. God requires no more than his grace will enable you to perform, if you are not negligent in the use of it. He will excuse, in mercy, such errors as flow from human weakness. But he knows exactly how far that weakness extends: if you yield to it with approbation, if you indulge it by seeking those objects which dissipate your attention, then your frailty degenerates into *guilt*: then do you incur his displeasure, which is the worst of all evils, since nothing so terrible can befall you as the loss of his favor. On the con-

trary, if you are not wanting in your continued endeavours, to animate your mind with a just sense of the importance of this duty, although you may not always (or perhaps but very seldom) experience that high delight which results from its performance, and, which those who are sensible of it, allow to exceed all other pleasures, you will still have the secret satisfaction that must arise from every *endeavour* to please your Maker; and your petitions will not be disregarded by him who judgeth the hearts of his worshippers.

SUNDAY X.

ON PRAYER.

IN every possible circumstance of life, you will find a habit of devotion, a comfort and an assistance. It will add to the pleasures of prosperity, to remember with thankful gratitude the great author of all your enjoyments: to praise him for those friends he has lent to instruct you, to improve you, and to heighten your felicity. You will commend them to his care; your heart will expand to every generous and noble feeling, when you implore for *them* the protection of your Heavenly Father. You will find your affections for those who are dear to you, increased by your prayers in their behalf: and, while you supplicate Heaven for their happiness, you will determine to promote it, as much as you can, by a virtuous and exemplary conduct. Or, should you suffer from affliction, of whatever kind it may be, are you

in bodily pain, you will be able with humble confidence to ask a blessing on the means which are used for your recovery. At the same time beseeching God to increase your patience, and to fortify your resolution to bear whatever he shall ordain you to undergo. Nor can you imagine, till you have learned by experience, what a satisfaction you will receive from this exercise. All other pleasures are insipid; all amusements lose the power of pleasing; when we suffer from bodily indisposition: but we feel that God is able to assist us; that though outward applications are vain, though medicine should not immediately relieve, yet that God can give success to the kindness of our friends, and impart a healing influence to what is administered to us.

WHATEVER therefore is your situation; however distressed your circumstances, look up to him who is a refuge in trouble. If you mourn the death of your parents, God is the father of the fatherless; he protecteth the cause of the orphan; his mercy can supply to you that greatest loss, and raise up new friends to che-

fish and instruct you. Endeavour to become worthy of his favor, by a strict attention to your duty, and you may approach his throne with full reliance, that he will hear you in the time of trouble. He has told you, in his word, to call upon him? and that "those that come unto him he will in no wise cast out." Does he not know your every secret distress, although you cannot reveal it to any mortal ear? If you are disregarded by those you are with, if you feel forsaken and neglected, remember for your comfort, that you have a friend, who (if you are good) will never leave nor abandon you. A friend, whom death cannot deprive you of; whom absence cannot sever; who will be present in every danger, and who has the power, as well as the *kindness* to assist you in all the possible calamities you can experience. Seek to him then from the first dawn of reason; accustom your heart to implore that sacred assistance, to give you increase of knowledge and wisdom.

IN all your enjoyments remember to acknowledge his mercy: in all your improvements thank him for the happiness of instruction, and for the

powers which enable you to receive it. When you see others destitute of health, deprived of sight, of the use of their limbs, or of any of the comforts which you are so happy as to enjoy; let it excite your gratitude to that Being, who has so liberally enriched you with his gifts: and let your compassionate prayers for the unfortunate, accompany the praises of a thankful heart.

To conclude, remember that there can be no real piety, without the exercise of true devotion; and that unless you endeavour to recollect the object you address, your thoughts will wander upon every other subject: and while you kneel before the God of Heaven, if occupied by the vanities of earth, be assured, that from such prayers you can experience no satisfaction, nor hope to have them accepted by the searcher of hearts.

SUNDAY XI.

ON CHARITY.

SURROUNDED with all the comforts, supplied with every necessary, and abounding with the superfluities of life, young persons are apt to forget the sufferings of those in a less happy situation. They know, indeed, that the poor and the *unfortunate* exist in some obscure dwellings; and when they *behold* these miserable objects, the sight of them may inspire some transient feelings of compassion. But, my young friend, a *Christian* must do more than *pity* the wretched. If you would imitate the example of your Divine Master, you must *relieve* their distresses; you must alleviate their sorrows, and soften the rigours of poverty. Perhaps you will think, that as you have but a small allowance at your age, the duty of charity may be

excused. Yet consider, that if you can dispose but of a *little*, your own wants are all amply supplied; and you may surely spare from the gratifications of fancy, to those who are destitute of every convenience.

CONSIDER how many worthy families eat to-day their scanty portion; and, when they rise from their unsatisfied meal, the cravings of hunger are hardly appeased; and yet they are uncertain where to find the next supply. How many to the horrors of penury, add the bitter pangs of disease? Reflect for a moment, how hard *you* find it to suffer the agony of pain, although relieved by every art of medicine, and soothed by the kind endearments of every sympathizing friend! But if you could repair to the desolate mansion of poverty, you would behold none of these comforts to abate the anguish of the sufferer. Unknown to the world, the physician is not summoned to his assistance; those necessaries which might alleviate the distemper, he has no money to procure. Unable to rise and provide, by his usual labour, for his accustomed supply, he must lay there

and perish, unseen, unattended, unassisted, and unlamented. Or, if he have the blessing of relations, his wife and children do but too often share the same unhappy fate. Shut up together in one small unwholesome apartment, they breathe the infectious air of sickness, till the like disorder extends to each of them, and they have only the additional misery of being the mournful witnesses of each others sufferings.

THINK not that I am speaking of *imaginary* woes: such scenes which I have mentioned are but too frequent and too real. The living and the dead are mingled together in the same contracted room, and all the horrors of sickness and poverty are aggravated by the unwholesome connection. Little do *you* think, while you are in a state so different, while you perhaps are vexed and provoked at every trifling disappointment, how many at this moment suffer the most heart-rending calamity! how many are confined in a loathsome prison, far from their wretched families, who are left to starve in their absence;—confined for the want of a trifling sum

which they have not ability to discharge. I dare say you will pity such distress; but what can you do? Can it be thought that the small share of riches you possess can any way assist such heightened calamity? Perhaps not; but in such a case God will accept the benevolent *design* instead of the intended *deed*: for he accepteth "according to what a man *hath*;" and not according to what he hath *not*."

But these pages may be read by some in more affluent circumstances; to all, however, the widow of Zarephath, and the poor woman who threw her two mites into the treasury, are held forth as an example. I do not mean that any are expected to make themselves poor by their *donations* to others; but that even those in indigent circumstances, by dispensing a *little* of their small store to those who are still *lower* than themselves, may be entitled to that providential care which ordained, "that the barrel of meal should not waste, nor the cruise of oil fail, till the Lord sent rain upon the earth."

I WOULD wish, therefore, to persuade my young readers, instead of spending the whole portion allotted to their own disposal, in bawbles, trinkets, or whatever objects may engage their inclination; to reserve a *part* for the relief of the necessitous. And, if they have any sentiments of religion or duty, if they have any feelings of humanity, they will not esteem the sum which they so dedicate, as productive of little pleasure. On the contrary, they will find, that to have contributed to stop the falling of *one* tear from the overcharged eye of affliction; to have fed, though but for *one* meal, the starving appetites of a hungry family; to have clothed, though but with a *thin* covering, the shivering body of the naked sufferer; will afford them more true satisfaction to reflect upon, than they could receive from the most elegant trinket which the hand of luxury might present.

SUCH toys may be the occasion of present pleasure; but that gratification is soon past: the eye soon grows familiar to the most beautiful productions of art, and indifference will then succeed to desire. But in the exercise of duty, in

promoting the happiness of others, there is an enjoyment which will last for ever; as every recollection of a *good* action is a return of the felicity which it first bestowed.

By a habit of prudent œconomy much may be saved; and if you lay aside what in your conscience you think you can spare from your income, to be disposed of in charitable uses, you will have a fund ready at all times, and be more easily disposed to discharge your duty in this respect, than if you consider each particular sum as depriving you of some indulgence. For whatever you think it reasonable to dedicate to this benevolent purpose, you ought to regard as the *property* of the *poor*; and not allow yourself to be so unfaithful a steward, as to spend *their* small provision in your own vanity or pleasure.

WITHOUT such a distribution you will be apt to put off your good intention to a *future* period, to wait for objects in *greater* need than those whom you could immediately assist; and in short, to grow hardened against the feelings

of pity, by the mean arguments of selfish avarice. I would certainly advise you to a discreet choice of the objects of your bounty; in this, as in every other case, your parents will be your best advisers: and, if you accustom yourself to reflect, you will easily perceive what cases are particularly deserving your compassion.

It is impossible to lay down any general rule in a matter which each one's circumstances must determine. The higher in life Providence has placed you, the more extensive ought to be your charities. Nor can your time be employed to greater advantage, than in attending to such tales of distress as may be mentioned before you. It will not be easy at your age, to seek out (in person) the sufferers who want your assistance; but you may enquire of others for those melancholy objects with which every neighbourhood does but too unhappily abound. Or it is most probable, that within your own acquaintance, you are connected with some families, whose honest industry is insufficient for their support.

If you are earnest to discharge this obliga-

tion to your fellow-creatures, you can never be long in want of the method or the means. Frugality will assist you in the most material part; and the world is but too full of the *unfortunate*, to make the discovery of them a very difficult task.

SUNDAY XII.

ON CANDOR.

THERE is a *charity* due to mankind in *general*, which is much more extensive in its signification than that of alms-giving. The one relates only to the *poor*, the other comprehends many *virtues*, and is explained by St. *Paul*, in his epistle to the *Corinthians*, as the substance of all our social duties. This charity he tells us, "suffereth long, and is kind; it is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

I SHALL not attempt to extend your thoughts at present to the whole of the amiable picture which the Apostle has drawn of this divine virtue; but confine myself to that charity, which disposes us to bear with our fellow-creatures, and to judge kindly of their actions: not to expose their faults without occasion, or

so delight in iniquity as to take pleasure in evil speaking.

IT is often seen that young persons of good-nature and understanding, are guilty of this fault through mere *inattention*. They have heard some of their acquaintance represented as behaving improperly; and without any further reflection, repeat to the next company with whom they are engaged, all the invidious particulars. This may indeed furnish matter for *present* conversation; but you should consider the future *consequence*. A *good name* is a property of such inestimable value, that nothing can recompence its loss. Nor can you tell how far the repeating an ill-natured anecdote may affect the absent person. Those who first told you the unkind report, may have spoken the truth; but consider how many ways *truth* may be altered in the representation; and the person so accused might be able to justify himself entirely by the account of some circumstances, or some unknown reason, which would fully vindicate his conduct.

Is it not highly unchristian then to run the

chance of injuring the innocent, for the trifling amusement of having *something to say*? But, perhaps, you find a *greater* enjoyment; the persons you describe to others in a ridiculous, or a blameable light, may have excited your envy by their good qualities, or by being in a more agreeable situation than yourself; and therefore you are pleased with an opportunity to receive any thing to their prejudice.

But is this either generous or just? Should you like in similar circumstances that they should act so by you? How would you wish to be treated if you had done any thing wrong? Should you approve of those who would publish the tale to others? Could you esteem or love them? On the contrary, if you had been spoken of with slight and contempt, and any person had vindicated your character, had checked the reports of ill-nature, or mentioned your praiseworthy actions; would it not inspire you with a tender regard for them in future? You would experience a satisfaction in their company, and feel delighted to hear of their success. Surely, then, the same motives ought to excite every

one to be careful how they ridicule the follies or imperfections of their acquaintance. It betrays a contemptible narrowness of mind, is inconsistent with the candid spirit of a *Christian*, and with that great example of charity which our Divine Master displayed, when he so mildly told the accusers of the woman taken in adultery, that those who were *without sin* amongst them, should cast the first stone at her. Those who had been so vehement and earnest in calling for justice on her crime, "went out," says the sacred historian, "one by one, being convicted by their own consciences."

AND certainly this was recorded to teach us, that even where a person is *really* guilty of a fault, we ought not to aggravate their crime, and publish it to others; but to reflect how *many* errors we ourselves are conscious of, and, if we are judged with rigour and severity, how little claim we can have to kindness or pardon.

PERHAPS you will say, the offence is well known; it is become the public talk: very likely this *may* be the case: but had the *first* propagators

of an ill report been actuated by *charity*, the scandal would not have spread so widely.

EVERY one to whom you repeat it, (if before ignorant) becomes an additional person informed, who will have it in his power still further to extend all the bad consequences which attend a loss of reputation, and render it so much the more difficult for the offender, by a future reformation, to regain a forfeited good name.

IN truth, there is no opinion more dangerous to a young person, than the idea, that their example is of no use in society. It is by the addition of units that all numbers must be composed; and therefore each *one* may be of general service by his virtues, or of general evil by his vices; as they each add strength to the cause, either of religion or of wickedness.

IF you corrupt *one* companion by your follies; that *one* may in like manner seduce a new acquaintance: till your guilt, and the ill effects of your misdemeanors, may extend to thousands.

In like manner, though you esteem yourself of such trifling consequence in life; be assured, that by a regularly pious conduct, you may influence numbers to follow the same noble path: and however it may not appear to be your work at present, yet you know not from what seemingly *unnoticed* circumstances a good impression has been frequently produced. You may rest certain, that there is nothing more likely to make others imitate and love you, than a constant attention to that divine precept, "Of always doing unto others as you would they should do unto *you*."

CONSCIENCE in this case, if you consult her faithfully, will dictate the proper conduct. As *you* would like to be treated, so behave to all with whom you are connected. Indulge no felish passion at the expence of good-nature. The safest side is always to be *kind*. You cannot err in concealing the infirmities of others, where *truth* or *honor* does not require the publication: and by a heedless repetition of all you may hear, you are liable to occasion much unhappiness. Do not encourage ungenerous suspicions, for "Charity thinketh no evil." 1

The *appearance* of an action is often deceitful, and “ to his own master each one must stand or fall.” God only is the searcher of hearts, and can be acquainted with the secret motives which may aggravate or excuse.

“ JUDGE not, and ye shall not be judged. Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

SUNDAY XIII.

ON DEATH.

I THINK I cannot better close these meditations, than with a subject which must concern every reader; with a subject, though it may appear to be most distant from those for whose use this little volume is designed, yet, as the tenure of life is so uncertain, the *youngest* reader may be perhaps the *first* to experience the consequence of—*death*.

THERE are so many accidents, so many distempers from which no prudence can secure, no situation can exempt, nor the strength and vivacity of youth guard their possessor, that you will do well, to consider how far you are interested in that momentous period.

DEATH, my dear friend, has no terrors but what are the consequence of guilt. It is the

happy moment when every temptation shall cease, when every evil shall be at an end; and what matters it if you are called from a world of trouble at an early age: happy will be your lot, to be spared from all the dangers that might shake your virtue in a longer trial. The only thing therefore which should concern you in the prospect of this solemn period, is to consider, whether you are prepared for that future judgment which is to follow.

You know what are your designs, and how far you endeavour to act up to that reason, and those advantages which the Almighty has given you. "Beloved," says the apostle, "if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." That is, if upon a serious examination of your life, after sincerely considering the motives of your conduct, and comparing your actions with what you know is expected from you: if then you can faithfully say,—I have, as far as I could, constantly endeavoured to do my duty; I have tried, by reading good books, to improve my understanding, and to follow the

advice, and profit by the examples which they afforded me; I have observed the instructions of my parents, and obeyed them in all things within my power; when I have been guilty of any offence, I have been sorry for it, implored the pardon of my God, and determined to be more careful for the future; I can truly say, that I have felt no envy, malice, nor ill-will to any one, but have done *some* good in the world, though perhaps it has been in my power to be more useful; I have been honourable and just, have strictly observed the truth, both in my words and actions; I repent of all my sins, and hope in the merits of my Redeemer;—If you can say this without evasion, (I do not mean as a boast of your good deeds to others;) and can answer as in the presence of the Almighty, that this has been your course of life, and your constant endeavour; then you may quit this life without fear; and have a just foundation for confidence in God.

REMEMBER, that to deceive yourself, and to hide your faults by vain excuses, however it may now quiet your conscience, will be of no

avail at the day of judgment. Every emotion of your heart is known to the Divine Being. Be not afraid therefore to own your transgressions, and to confess them before him at present; but while you have life, health, and opportunity, determine to amend. Whatever may have been your failings, and how private soever they may have been committed, they are known, with every aggravated circumstance, to your Judge.

This thought cannot be too deeply impressed. Every passionate emotion, every ill-natured intention, however disguised; every deceitful word, with each angry revengeful resolution; in short, every evil *thought* is known and remembered by God. The days, and months, and years of life succeed each other so swiftly, and are so much alike, that you may be apt to forget the period of death, though it will certainly arrive." Many as young as yourself, are every hour surprised; and who can tell how soon it may be *your* fate?

If you defer your amendment to a more con-

venient season, that promised season may never arrive. You may not live to see the time you have fixed for your improvement; and how sad will be the reflection, that for the sake of some present trifle, to obtain some slight gratification, you have forfeited your honor by deceit, lost your good temper by petulance and resentment, or in any manner incurred the displeasure of God!

A good conscience is the greatest felicity: *that* alone can give you satisfaction through life, and comfort you in the hour of death. With the assurance of having acted rightly, how delightful is the prospect of futurity! The greatest and best of Beings is your friend. He will not be extreme to mark what you have done amiss, but will pardon the natural imperfections of his creatures.

Wilful crimes alone, continued in without repentance or reformation, will subject you to the misery and punishment of a future state. But then no *evasions* can deceive his knowledge. Recollect this, and examine yourself impartially.

Do not accuse others of being the occasion of your crimes. Each one must answer for his own guilt. You will not be judged by the measure of *their* transgressions, nor acquitted for *their* virtues. Did you know your Duty? Did you practise it? Answer to yourself these plain questions, and seek not to justify what you perceive has been faulty, by blaming others. Suppose, for instance, that your companions have been passionate and provoking; that was *their* offence, for which they must answer. To you this injurious behaviour was a temptation. How did you bear it? If you were angry in return, gave back defiance for their menaces, resolved to be spiteful in future, and tease them when you should have power; *this* will be *your* guilt, and you may dread its punishment.

If others fail in their duty it does not excuse you. The being provoked by unkind treatment may add to the merit of a mild and gentle demeanour; but can never set aside the necessity of virtue. We are too apt, especially in the warmth of youthful resentment, to think we have a right to return malevolence by equal ill-nature.

But this is the suggestion of *anger* not of *duty*: and when you come to be on a sick bed, to be in danger of *death*, you will think differently. The present is the only time to make use of good reflections, by putting them in practice. Spare yourself then the pain of future remorse, by considering, while you have opportunity, how your actions will appear to you at such an awful period. With what pleasure you will then recollect the resistance you have made to any evil inclination: what joy you will experience in reflecting upon every good action; how much delight it will be to consider each instance of your *fraternity*, *obedience*, *affection*, and *piety*. How infinitely will every sacrifice, or self-denial, be overpaid by the consideration of the reward to which you are hastening. And, as this time *must* arrive at *some* season of your life, as you do not know how soon it may surprise you, is it not worth all your care and attention to make it happy and desirable? To avoid all the agonies of a guilty conscience, terrified by the dread of punishment, and a fear of meeting that God, who is the *friend*, the *protector*, and the graci-

euſe rewarder of the *virtuous*? Let me, therefore, in conclusion, entreat you to remember how trifling every earthly concern will appear to you when you come to die. Let me conjure you to present your early days as a pleasing offering to Heaven; not to embitter your *future* hours by mispending the *present*. To arm your mind with fortitude; and by reflecting, that if now you suffer difficulties, *hereafter* you shall rejoice in Heaven. If vice appear more easy and alluring, and virtue require some trouble to obey her at all times, yet the recompence that awaits you is *glorious*; and the evils you will avoid are dreadful beyond any thing you can imagine.

ALL that has been said in the foregoing pages is intended to promote the cause of religion and truth, and however defective may be the execution, it is most sincerely designed to advance your real interest.

WITH the most ardent wishes for your welfare, the author concludes this little work;

entreating the young reader to reflect seriously upon its contents, and to remember, that the *subjects* are worthy of the most attentive consideration.

END OF VOL. I.



